DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 403 CE 061 688

AUTHOR Wonacott, Michael E.
TITLE Apprenticeship and the Future of the Work Force. ERIC Digest No. 124.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-CE-92-124
PUB DATE 92
CONTRACT RI88062005
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Apprenticeships; *Employment Patterns; Government School Relationship; Industrial Training; Job Training; Promotion (Occupational); Retraining; School Business Relationship; Skilled Occupations; Training Methods; *Vocational Education; Work Experience Programs
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

One promising practice for improving workplace preparation, apprenticeship, has been effective in preparing skilled workers for the changing needs of the workplace. Apprenticeship is a training strategy with eight components: it combines hands-on training on the job with related instruction; employer needs dictate programs; it is regulated by law; it leads to official credentials; time and money are invested by employer/sponsors; wages are provided during programs; apprentices work under master workers; and apprenticeship involves both written agreements and implicit expectations. Apprenticeship in the United States also provides upgrading and retraining for employed adults. U.S. apprenticeship is not a standardized institution. Programs registered with state or federal agencies offer apprenticeships in approximately 830 occupations. Apprenticeships should be more widely used as a training strategy and should be established in occupations/industries not now considered apprenticeable. Vocational-technical education should be more closely linked to apprenticeship components of earning and learning. The following benefits can accrue: full participation of learning and working is allowed; students understand the big picture; apprenticeships provide pay and advancement while working; work-based learning has an advantage for noncollege-bound youth; apprenticeships offer employer/sponsor benefits; and youth apprenticeships demonstrate the community educational role. The role of the federal government and education should be strengthened to increase program quality. (10 references) (NLA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document *
****

ED347403

Apprenticeship and the Future of the Work Force
ERIC Digest No. 124

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

CE061688

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

DIGEST
NO. 124

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

Apprenticeship and the Future of the Work Force

by Michael E. Wonacott

1992

EDO-CE-92-124

Changing demographics, changing technology, and increasing international competition have combined to make the preparation of workers for the workplace a critical issue today. One training strategy in particular is often cited as holding great promise for improving workplace preparation: apprenticeship. Apprenticeship has been very effective in preparing skilled workers, in the United States and abroad. However, before vocational-technical educators can capitalize on the benefits of apprenticeship as a training strategy, they must know what apprenticeship is–and what it is not–and how its characteristics can be imparted to other educational programs.

What Apprenticeship Is

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Federal Committee on Apprenticeship (1992) defines apprenticeship as a training strategy with eight essential components:

- Apprenticeship is sponsored by employers and others who can actually hire and train individuals in the workplace, and it combines hands-on training on the job with related theoretical instruction.
- Workplace and industry needs dictate key details of apprenticeship programs–training content, length of training, and actual employment settings.
- Apprenticeship has a specific legal status and is regulated by federal and state laws and regulations.
- Apprenticeship leads to formal, official credentials–a Certificate of Completion and journeyperson status.
- Apprenticeship generally requires a significant investment of time and money on the part of employers or other sponsors.
- Apprenticeship provides wages to apprentices during training according to predefined wage scales.
- Apprentices learn by working directly under master workers in their occupations.
- Apprenticeship involves both written agreements and implicit expectations. Written agreements specify the roles and responsibilities of each party; implicit expectations include the right of program sponsors to employ the apprentice, recouping their sizable investment in training, and the right of apprentices to obtain such employment.

What Apprenticeship Is Not

It is equally important to understand what apprenticeship is *not*. In some European countries, apprenticeship is a widely used form of vocational training for young people (Brodsky 1989). In Austria, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, apprenticeship is a common path for transition from school to work. In the United States, on the other hand, apprenticeship is not aimed at youth who are completing school; rather, it functions far more often to provide upgrading and retraining for adults who are already employed (Glover 1986).

Furthermore, apprenticeship is not a standardized, uniform institution in the United States ("Apprenticeship" 1991-92). The DOL's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training oversees apprenticeship functions in collaboration with agencies in 27 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Apprenticeship programs may be sponsored by employers, employer associations, or jointly by employers and unions. Programs registered with state or federal agencies offer apprenticeships in approximately 830 occupations.

In addition, apprenticeship is–in some respects–not widely used as a training strategy (General Accounting Office 1992). Two-thirds of all U.S. apprentices are in 20 of the 830 apprenticeable occupations; of those 20 occupations, all but three (corrections officer, fire fighter, and police officer) are in the construction and metal trades. In addition, minorities are underrepresented in apprenticeship programs (ibid.).

Moreover, apprenticeship is not closely and productively linked with vocational-technical education in the United States (Grossman and Drier 1988). Some apprenticeship leaders feel that vocational-technical training provides inadequate preparation for the workplace. Apprenticeship leaders often have little detailed knowledge of vocational-technical education, and educators often lack such detailed knowledge about apprenticeship. In addition, leaders in both vocational-technical education and apprenticeship can be influenced by issues of control and ownership.

Finally, apprenticeship is not just a strategy that involves training outside the classroom or training content strictly determined by occupational needs (Federal Committee on Apprenticeship 1992). Apprenticeship is distinguished from such training strategies–including cooperative education, tech prep, and summer or part-time work experiences–by the unique combination of its eight essential components. Although such other training strategies may have great value in their own right, only apprenticeship produces fully trained, competent journeypersons with the skills needed to perform effectively in the workplace.

The Benefits of Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship programs, like other forms of work-based learning, can show significant benefits in preparing workers for the workplace (Employment and Training Administration 1989). Learning in the workplace under the supervision of a master worker allows full participation by students in the process of learning and working. Through observing and commenting, students can build technical skills, experience the sharing of tasks, and see how technical tasks relate specifically to theoretical knowledge and interpretation.

Students are more likely to be able to understand the big picture. Students can see for themselves how the technical task can be affected by the context in which it is performed and how their own performance must take that context into account. Such broadening of technical performance makes workers more skilled, more flexible, and more able to contribute to workplace productivity. In addition, students are prepared to acquire new skills later in life.

Other benefits accrue directly to students in apprenticeship and other forms of work-based learning. Students can receive training and acquire new skills while working and earning an income at the same time. For adults who are already employed, apprenticeship may provide the only opportunity to advance into higher-paying, higher-skilled jobs.

Work-based learning can provide numerous advantages for noncollege-bound youth. These advantages arise from the closer linkages between school and work that are typically part of work-based learning. Such closer linkages are believed to lead to substantial improvements in the career options of noncollege youth, to increase their on-the-job productivity, and to

provide significant, meaningful incentives for students to do well in school–and even to stay in school (Filipczak 1992).

Apprenticeships also offer considerable benefits to employers and other training sponsors, schools, and the community (Florida Council on Vocational Education 1992). Benefits to employers and training sponsors include assistance from trained educators in job analysis and training design, the active participation of the school's testing and guidance professionals in program recruitment, shortened training times and costs, and the opportunity to prepare students to meet the individual sponsors' particular requirements. Schools benefit by being able to provide educational opportunities outside their usual physical, financial, and staff resources. Instructors, administrators, and counselors have increased and improved contact with local employers and employment conditions.

Youth apprenticeships can be a visible demonstration of the role played by the community as a whole in education. Youth apprenticeships can help increase the number of students who make a successful transition from school to work, reducing the number of economically unproductive members of the community. Local job stability is enhanced when local students receive relevant and effective training for local jobs. In addition, healthy youth apprenticeship programs can help draw new industries and new employers into the community.

Broadening the Scope of Apprenticeship

How can the benefits of apprenticeship be maximized? How can more workers and more students enjoy those benefits? More people can take advantage of the benefits if the scope of apprenticeship in the United States is broadened (Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training 1988). Apprenticeships could be established in a wide range of occupations and industries not currently considered apprenticeable. Candidate occupations and industries tend to be high-skill and high-tech areas, with consideration given to labor market supply and demand. In addition, the idea of providing continuing training for skill updating through apprenticeship-type programs has been proposed.

Many feel that the role played in apprenticeship by the federal government and by education should be strengthened to increase program quality. Technical assistance, program promotion, and tax incentives are among the specific suggestions for an increased role for government; leadership and attention on the part of government are also urged. An increased role for education centers on the establishment and improvement of linkages between education and the workplace. Through such linkages, industry could better communicate its concerns and needs to education, educational planning could better reflect the realities of the workplace, and the needs of minorities could be better served by apprenticeship programs.

Borrowing the Components of Apprenticeship

Vocational-technical educators can capitalize on the benefits of apprenticeship by borrowing those components of apprenticeship that are associated with increased success in learning and earning. Like all work-based learning, apprenticeship derives much of its effectiveness from its close and strict association with the workplace. Workplace needs determine training content, scope, and duration, ensuring relevance and timeliness. Apprentices receive recognizable, universally accepted credentials upon completion, so that they can benefit from their training wherever they go.

In many respects, these characteristics and benefits apply–at least in theory–to many vocational-technical training programs. Good programs are always carefully grounded in the world of work; they start from the needs of the workplace to determine the content and nature of training and to provide students with the specific knowledge and skills needed to enter the workplace. Such effective and consistent linkages between training and work may be the best way for educators to capitalize on the characteristics of apprenticeship that lead to success in learning and earning.

References

"Apprenticeship." *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (Winter 1991-92): 27-40.

Brodsky, M. "International Developments in Apprenticeship." *Monthly Labor Review* 112, no. 7 (July 1989): 40-41. (EJ 393 232)

Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. *Apprenticeship 2000: The Public Speaks.* Washington, DC: Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, U.S. Department of Labor, 1988. (ED 312 387)

Employment and Training Administration. *Work-Based Learning: Training America's Workers.* Washington, DC: ETA, U.S. Department of Labor, 1989. (ED 323 365)

Federal Committee on Apprenticeship. *The Meaning of Apprenticeship: When and How to Use the Term. A Policy Recommendation.* Washington, DC: Federal Committee on Apprenticeship, U.S. Department of Labor, 1992. (ED 342 924)

Filipczak, B. "Apprenticeships: From High School to High Skills." *Training* 29, no. 4 (April 1992): 23-29.

Florida Council on Vocational Education. *The Benefits of Apprenticeship: Implications for Public Policy in Florida.* Tallahassee: Florida Council on Vocational Education, 1992.

General Accounting Office. *Apprenticeship Training: Administration, Use, and Equal Opportunity.* Washington, DC: GAO, 1992. (ED 343 010)

Glover, R. W. *Apprenticeship Lessons from Abroad. Information Series no. 305.* Columbus: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1986. (ED 268 374)

Grossman, G. M., and Drier, H. N. *Apprenticeship 2000: The Status of and Recommendations for Improved Counseling, Guidance, and Information Processes.* Columbus: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1988. (ED 298 356)

Developed with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract No. RI88062005. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of OERI or the Department. *Digests* may be freely reproduced.

CENTER ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
1900 KENNY ROAD • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43210